

Wisconsin Historical Society
Determination of Eligibility Form

(Revised May 2013)

WisDOT Project ID #: 1060-27-01

WHS #: 13-0065/MI / MT

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AUG 28 2013

DIV HIST PRES

Property Name(s): Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery
Address/Location: 134 S. Dana Court
City & County: City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Zip Code: 53214
Town: T7N Range: R21E Section: S35
Date of Construction: Ca. 1921

WisDOT Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this request for Determination of Eligibility:

☐ Meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria.
☒ Does not meet the National Register of Historic Places criteria.

Rebecca Burkel

8/27/13

Rebecca Burkel, WisDOT Historic Preservation Officer

Date

State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property:

☐ Meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria.
☒ Does not meet the National Register of Historic Places criteria.

Jim Draeger

10/2/13

Jim Draeger, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Comments (FOR AGENCY USE ONLY)

Division of Historic Preservation
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, WI 53706

Classification:

Ownership	Type of Property:		# of Contributing	# of Non-Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	-->		1
<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> site	-->		
If public, specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	-->		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	-->		ca. 1,700
	<input type="checkbox"/> district	Total:	0	ca. 1,701

Function/Use:

Historic Function(s): Funerary: Cemetery

Current Function(s): Funerary: Cemetery

Architectural Style(s): No Style

Criteria:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A (history)	Areas of Significance:	<u>Ethnic Heritage</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B (important persons)	Period of Significance:	<u>ca 1921-1963</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> C (architecture/eng.)	Significant Dates:	<u>ca. 1921</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D (archaeology)	Significant Person:	<u>N/A</u>
	Cultural Affiliation:	<u>Jewish</u>
	Architect/Builder:	<u>N/A</u>

Criteria Considerations:

<input type="checkbox"/> A (owned by religious institution)	<input type="checkbox"/> E (reconstruction)
<input type="checkbox"/> B (moved)	<input type="checkbox"/> F (commemorative)
<input type="checkbox"/> C (birthplace/grave)	<input type="checkbox"/> G (<50 years old)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D (cemetery)	

ATTACHMENT CHECKLIST

- ☒ Historic boundary map
- ☒ Labeled, professionally printed color photographs
- ☒ USGS map with UTM coordinates

Property Info:

Acreage of Property:

3.22

UTM Reference:

16

419858

4764516

Zone

Easting

Northing

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of this cemetery is defined by S. Dana Court on the west (173.74'), IH-94 on the south (635.25'), the Veteran's Administration Cemetery on the east (237') and the former Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company right-of-way on the north (640.95'). The length of the cemetery parallels IH-94.

Boundary Justification:

This is an appropriate boundary that is consistent with the property lines on the north, west, south and east. It encompasses an appropriate setting and includes the entire cemetery.

Methodology:

(Describe the steps taken to identify and evaluate the historic property, including research, consultation with WisDOT Environmental Services, and previous eligibility recommendations)

This Determination of Eligibility (DOE) was required by the Division of Historic Buildings and Preservation at the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS). While the proposed IH-94 reconstruction project will not have a direct adverse effect on the cemetery, or the land associated with it, the WHS was concerned about indirect effects. Thus was a more detailed DOE necessitated that looked at the cemetery primarily from a cultural perspective (Criterion A), as well as to determine what, if any, significant people may be buried in it (Criterion B). Regarding cultural significance, efforts focused on conversations with the Jewish Museum Milwaukee, as well as extensively studying John Gurda's *One People, Many Paths: A History of Jewish Milwaukee*, and *The History of the Jews of Milwaukee*, by Louis J. Swichkow and Lloyd P. Gartner.

The matter of Criterion B is a bit dicey, since, for a grave or burial site to be eligible for the Register, *National Register Bulletin 41* explains that those interred must be of exceptional historical significance and that no other standing structures associated with them can be found. The procedure used to identify Jewish Milwaukeeans of some importance focused on reviewing a list of those buried at the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery that was acquired through the genealogical website www.linkstothe-past.com. That list was then compared to the indexes of Gurda's book and Swichkow's and Gartner's book, in addition to that in the *Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography*. As the names of those interred were found in the indexes reviewed, the appropriate pages were consulted in order to determine as best as possible if the person discussed might be the same as that buried at the cemetery. In many cases names matched, but the years of birth and death did not—a fact that clearly suggested the person buried and the person discussed were not one in the same. In other cases, the names and dates either did match, or, at the very least, there was no evidence to suggest that they did not. The two books selected for review appear to be the most authoritative works on Milwaukee's Jewish community. Similarly, the *Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography*, while dated, is an important source for identifying people in Wisconsin's history that have achieved a level of prominence. It was those people thus identified, and for which information was presented, that provide the basis for the Criterion B discussion.

The chapter on Jews in Wisconsin, found in *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Volume 3), was also useful and instructive. It included, however, no references to, nor information about, Jewish cemeteries.

Narrative Description:

(Describe the property in two pages or less.)

This cemetery is located immediately north of IH-94, and east of Dana Court (historically Hawley Road). It is a generally open parcel of 3.22 acres of land that gently slopes down from west to east and that contains several large, mature trees. Approximately 1,700 burials identified by stone markers, one of

which is an above ground accommodation, all generally placed in imperfect rows, along with one modern mausoleum, are located in the cemetery.

CRM Context Chapters: RELIGION: JEWISH

Narrative Statement of Significance:

(Describe the context in which you have evaluated the property and give a summary statement of significance, preferably in no more than two pages.)

Statement of Significance:

The Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery was considered for National Register eligibility under Criterion A, B, C and D. Regarding Criterion A, the cemetery was established in ca. 1921 by a Jewish Orthodox congregation. It is today, however, an independent Orthodox cemetery, one of several in the Milwaukee area. Those buried in the cemetery include several Jews who were prominent enough to receive mention in one or two, or both, books that have detailed the histories of the Jewish experience in Milwaukee. None of those people achieved the significance necessary to qualify the cemetery for eligibility under Criterion B, subject to Criterion Consideration D (cemetery). As for Criterion C, research found no evidence to suggest the cemetery is the work of a landscape master, nor that it employed any kind of a landscape plan. There is only one structure on the property and it is a contemporary mausoleum. Finally considered was Criterion D. There are no active archaeological research questions or issues that could be answered by the remains of those buried at Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel. Given this information, and considering it all in the context of Criterion Consideration D (cemetery), it has been determined that the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register.

Historic Context:

The Jewish Community in Milwaukee, which was then comprised of about 200 families, established in 1848 the Imanu-El (Emanu-El) Cemetery Association. This was the foundation of the first Synagogue in the city.¹ The association purchased land on 15th Street, between the Lisbon Plank and Fond du Lac roads. This Jewish Cemetery came to be known as the Hopkins Street Cemetery. It was later named "Shaarei Tzedik" (Gates of Righteousness).

Over the years, construction, neglect and vandalism led to the relocation of almost all those graves to the Greenwood Cemetery at 2615 W. Cleveland Avenue.² According to the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Database, eighty-seven of the original 360 burials remain. Documents suggest that the last burial there took place in 1888.³

The establishment of this cemetery illustrates one of the basic patterns of Jewish cemetery formation, not only in Milwaukee but also in other cities throughout the United States. Jews emigrated from Central or Eastern Europe and established communities that formed synagogues and, in many cases, cemeteries. The latter were associated with synagogues and even passed from one to another as old communities dissolved and new ones formed.

¹ Wendi Maloney, "Religion: Jewish," in *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Volume 3), ed. Barbara Wyatt, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), 19-6.

² Ruth Traxler, *The Golden Land: 150 Years of Jewish Life in Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: The Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations, 1994), 86.

³ The International Jewish Cemetery, Viewed on line at: <http://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org/wisconsin-wi/milwaukee-milwaukee-county.html>, 12 August 2013.

The Spring Hill Cemetery illustrates another pattern of Jewish cemetery formation found not only in Milwaukee, but also in other cities in the United States. A small group of young Jewish men formed in 1861 the Gilead Lodge under the rules and structures of the B'nai B'rith fraternal order. They established this local chapter of B'nai B'rith in order to provide mutual support for the Jewish men of Milwaukee who were about to go off to fight in the American Civil War. After the war was over, the organization launched a vigorous campaign to expand its membership.⁴

B'nai B'rith was formed in New York in 1843 to provide Jewish Immigrants in America with community structures similar to those found in Europe. Its founding documents state that it would visit and attend to the sick and assist the poor, widows and orphans. In addition to providing mutual aid and social services, the various lodges of B'nai B'rith expanded to including advocating for the rights of Jews in America, as well as in other countries. They have also launched other advocacy groups like the Anti-Defamation League and Hillel⁵

During the 1860s, though there was an increase in the Jewish population in Milwaukee, there was not a comparable increase in synagogue membership. Many Milwaukee Jews, and Jews in other cities, affiliated themselves with fraternal organizations. By 1867, the Gilead Lodge purchased the property on what is today South Hawley Court and chartered the second Jewish Cemetery in Milwaukee. It was named Spring Hill and is still operated by the Gilead Lodge 41 of B'nai B'rith. Though predominately a Jewish Cemetery, it is not associated with any one synagogue and is maintained as non-denominational.

Criterion A: History

The most recent Jewish cemetery in Milwaukee was established in 1921 by the Beth Medrash Hagodol Synagogue, an orthodox congregation.⁶ Within a decade of its founding there was a series of consolidations of synagogues in Milwaukee. Operation and ownership of the cemetery was placed in the hands of an independent group and it was renamed Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel. It remains an independent Orthodox Jewish Cemetery today.

Burial practices at Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel conform to the Code of Jewish Practice.⁷ Non-Orthodox Jews may be buried here if they conform to these practices and are descendants of Jews already buried in the cemetery.

The founding and continued practices at the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel cemetery are representative of other Jewish cemeteries in Milwaukee, thus is this entity not unique. It is for this reason that the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

Criterion B: Association with Significant People

The Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel cemetery opened in circa 1921 and has approximately 1,700 burials.⁸ Of those, several appear to be associated with Jewish Milwaukeeans of minimal importance or more.⁹

⁴ "Gilead Lodge to Hold Ceremonies," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 06 March 1921.

⁵ "About B'nai B'rith," Viewed on line at <http://bnaibrith.org>, 12 August 2013.

⁶ Howard Karsh, former Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery director, Telephone Conversation with David Keene, Archaeological Research, Inc., 15 August 2013.

⁷ The *Code of Jewish Practice* is the collective body of religious laws for Jews, including biblical law and later talmudic and rabbinic law, as well as customs and traditions.

⁸ *Milwaukee County Online Genealogy and Family History Library: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Jewish Cemetery*, Viewed on line at www.linkstothepast.com/milwaukee/032.php, 13 June 2013.

⁹ See methodological discussion on page 3 of this document to review the procedure used for this section.

Samuel Siegelman died on 27 August 1973. But in 1956, a man of that name was the president of the New Home Club, which was intended to help those driven from Europe by the Holocaust by helping them to become “good Americans...without losing what is worthwhile in Jewish tradition.”¹⁰ Nathan Stein was a lawyer and a Reformed Jew of Russian descent. He, along with Rabbi Joseph L. Baron, convened the first meeting of the Milwaukee Jewish Council in December 1938, in order “to consider and act upon proposals for safeguarding the rights of Jews....” Stein was also the first president and campaign chairman of Milwaukee’s Jewish Welfare Fund. He died on 23 August 1944.¹¹

Rabbi Jacob Twerski was retained by the Anshe Sfard Temple at 12th and Garfield in 1928. Over time, he cultivated a group likely starting in the early 1930s that, by 1939, was known as Beth Jehudah. Those folks started in 1949 to build a new synagogue at 54th and Center Street in the Sherman Park neighborhood. The congregation flourished. Over time, however, as the Jewish community started to leave Sherman Park, membership was affected. But through the efforts of Twerski’s son and grandson, both rabbis, Beth Jehudah recommitted itself to the neighborhood as others left. The Anshai Lebowitz congregation departed Sherman Park for Mequon in 1998. Beth Jehudah acquired that groups’ synagogue at 52nd and Burleigh and extensively remodeled it. The old facility on Center Street then became a pre-school for inner city children. Jacob Twerski died in August, 1973.¹²

Finally, a Howard Weinshel died on 01 October 2001. It is possible that he was the gentleman who, in the circa 1940s or 50s, was the president and secretary of the Perhifft Players, an area Yiddish theater group.¹³

National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places, very clearly states that, to be eligible for the Register, cemeteries have to be the final resting place of a person or persons that “must be of *outstanding* importance to the community, state or nation....” That provision is subject to Criteria Consideration C, which further states that the burial place is potentially eligible only if “no other appropriate site or building directly associated with...[that person’s] productive life” remains. The Bulletin also states that graves of a cultural group might qualify, as might the graves of those “who made outstanding contributions to the history of the state or area in which their graves are located.” And finally, the Bulletin acknowledged, under Criteria Consideration D, that a cemetery must derive “its primary significance from [the] graves of persons of transcendent importance....”¹⁴

Predicated on the review of people buried at the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery, as defined by the methodology presented, none of the interments are for people that have achieved the level of “*outstanding* importance to the community...” Additionally, regarding the burial place for a unique cultural group, the Milwaukee area claims eight Jewish cemeteries.¹⁵ That number obviates cultural significance for the subject cemetery. The Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

¹⁰ John Gurda, *One People, Many Paths: A History of Jewish Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Jewish Museum, 2009), 192.

¹¹ Louis J. Swichkow and Lloyd P. Gartner, *The History of the Jews of Milwaukee* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), 311, 341, 349.

¹² Swichkow and Gartner, 105, 154, 157, 164, 236-39, 297.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), 11, 16.

¹⁵ The eight cemeteries are identified as the Agudas Achim (3690 E. College Avenue, Cudahy), Anshai Lebowitz (326 S. Hawley Road, Milwaukee), Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel, 134 S. Dana Court, Milwaukee), Temple Menorah Ever-Rest (9363 N. 76th Street, Milwaukee), Greenwood (2615 W. Cleveland Avenue, Milwaukee), Mount Zion (14510 W. North Avenue, Brookfield), Second Home (3705 S. 43rd Street, Milwaukee), and Spring Hill, 166 S. Hawley Court, Milwaukee).

Criterion C: Architecture

With the exception of one, modern mausoleum, the cemetery has no architectural resources. Nor is there any evidence of a planned or created landscape.

Criterion D: Archaeology

Traditional Jewish burial practices are relatively simple. Once a person dies, a rabbi and a funeral director are usually called. The funeral director begins to make all appropriate arrangements and the rabbi initiates the ritual process.¹⁶

It is the Jewish custom to bury the body as soon as possible. Viewing the body is not part of traditional practices. It is considered disrespectful to look at a person who is unable to look back. But the body is never to be left unattended. A family member, or someone from the funeral home, is assigned that task. The body is not embalmed with chemicals. Traditionally, it is washed and wrapped in white linen shrouds. This symbolizes that all are equal in death. The body is then placed in a simple wooden casket manufactured without any metal hardware.

Traditionally, when the wooden casket is then placed in the ground, no vault is used. At the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery, however, vaults are permitted if the family insists.¹⁷

National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places, clearly states that, "anthropologists and historical archaeologists can gain information significant to American culture from burial places."¹⁸ In that sense, every cemetery is an important historic resource that can potentially yield information about a cultural or ethnic group. But in the case of this cemetery, burial practices are known. Traditional burial practices would preclude significant amounts of burial items. Vital statistics such as age and cause of death are recorded in county death records.

Except for a slight possibility that existing skeletal remains in this cemetery might provide some information regarding studies of Jewish populations in the mid to late twentieth century, there are no active research questions that could be answered by the remains at this facility. The Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery is not considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion D.

Conclusion:

The Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery has been considered for National Register eligibility under Criterion A, B, C and D, subject to Criteria Consideration D (cemetery). No evidence was found to support, or justify, eligibility under any one (or more) of these components.

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted the information in this section is gleaned from the website *Star of David Memorial Chapels: Jewish Burial Customs*, Viewed on line at (<http://jewish-funeral-home.com/Jewish-burial-customs.html>), on 12 August 2013.

¹⁷ "Cemetery Tries Natural Burial", *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* (10 May 2009), Viewed on line at (<http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/4468-2712.html>), on 12 August 2013.

¹⁸ Potter and Boland, *Bulletin 41*, 14.

Bibliography:

"About B'nai B'rith." Viewed online at <http://bnaibrith.org>, 12 August 2013.

Cemetery Tries Natural Burial", *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* (10 May 2009), Viewed on line at (<http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/4468-2712.html>), on 12 August 2013.

"Gilead Lodge to Hold Ceremonies." *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 06 March 1921.

Gurda, John. *One People, Many Paths: A History of Jewish Milwaukee*. Milwaukee: Jewish Museum, 2009.

"The International Jewish Cemetery." Viewed on line at: <http://www.iaigsjewishcemeteryproject.org/wisconsin-wi/milwaukee-milwaukee-county.html>, 12 August 2013.

"Jewish Burial Customs." Viewed online at Star of David Chapels, Chapels (<http://jewish-funeral-home.com/Jewish-burial-customs.html>), on 12 August 2013.

Karsh, Howard. Telephone conversation with David Keene, 15 August 2013.

Maloney, Wendi. "Religion: Jewish." In *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (Volume 3), ed. Barbara Wyatt, 19-1 to 19-31. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

Milwaukee County Online Genealogy and Family History Library: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Jewish Cemetery. Viewed on line at www.linkstothepast.com/milwaukee/032.php, on 13 June 2013.

Potter, Elisabeth Walton and Beth M. Boland. *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992.

Swichkow, Louis J. and Lloyd P. Gartner. *The History of the Jews in Milwaukee*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963.

Traxler, Ruth. *The Golden Land: 150 Years of Jewish Life in Milwaukee*. Milwaukee: The Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations, 1994.

Determination of Eligibility Prepared By:

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		Date:	16 August 2013

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City:	Milwaukee	State:	WI
Email:	Charlie.Webb@ch2m.com	Zip:	53214
		Date:	16 August 2013

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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to S
Photo #1 of 8

BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to ESE
Photo #2 of 8

BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to ENE
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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to WSW
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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to WSW
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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY
134 S. Dana Court
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI
Photo by: John N. Vogel
August 2013
View to NNW
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BETH HAMEDROSH HAGODEL CEMETERY

134 S. Dana Court

City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI

Photo by: John N. Vogel

August 2013

View to N

Photo #8 of 8

Delineation of the Historic Boundary:

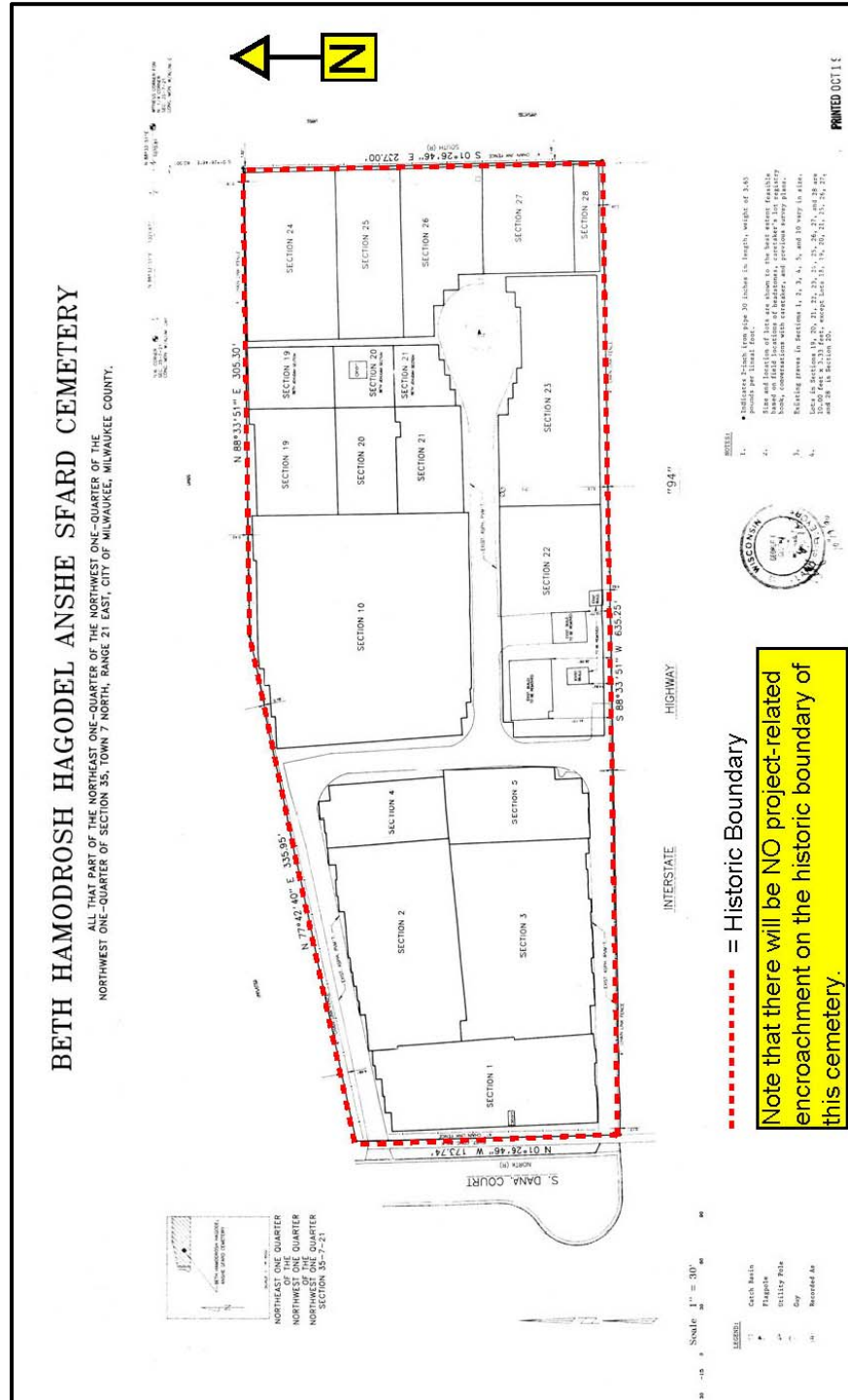


Figure 1: Historic boundary of the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. Note that IH-94 is on the south side of the cemetery.

Location of the Property on a USGS Map:

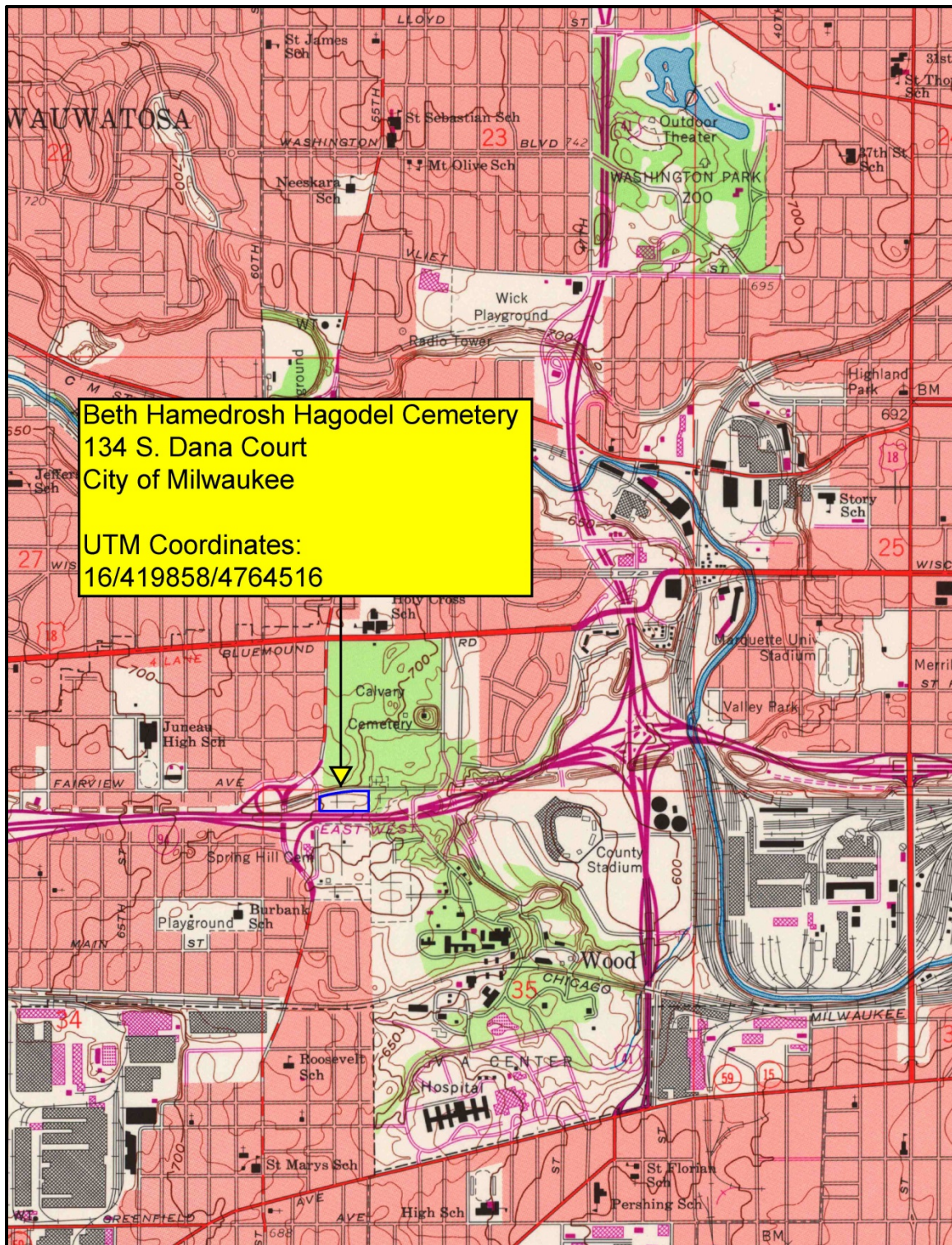


Figure 2: USGS map identifying the location and UTM coordinates of the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery (Milwaukee Quadrangle, 7.5').

Photographs Page 1



Photo 1 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery sign. View to south.



Photo 2 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. View to east southeast from northwest gate.

Photographs Page 2



Photo 3 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. View to east northeast from southwest gate.



Photo 4 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. View to west from southeast quadrant.

Photographs Page 3

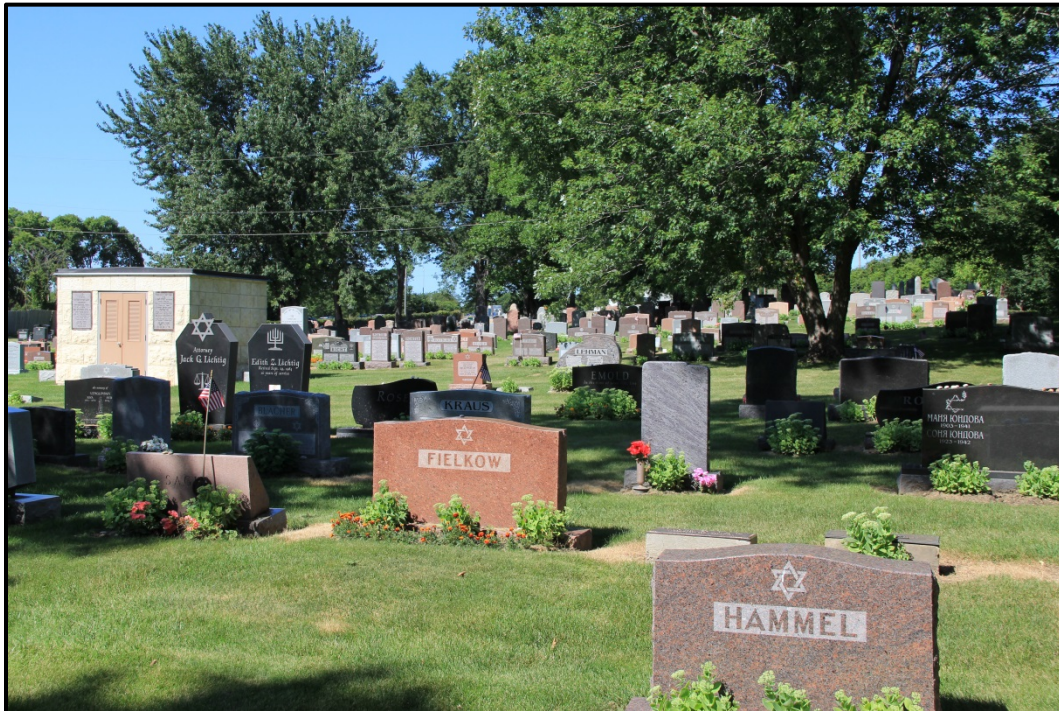


Photo 5 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. View to west southwest from north-east quadrant.



Photo 6 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. The only mausoleum on cemetery grounds. View to west northwest.

Photographs Page 4



Photo 7 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. The only above ground grave at the facility. View to north northwest.

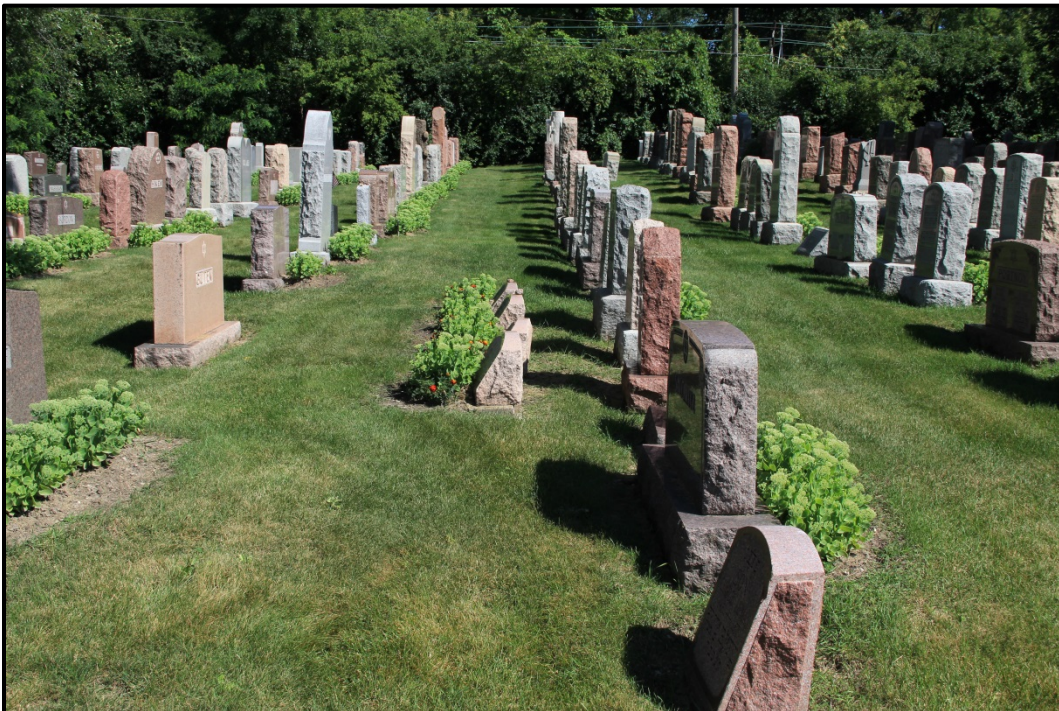


Photo 8 of 8: Beth Hamedrosh Hagodel Cemetery. View to north illustrating how the rows of graves are typically set.